

STATE OF MAINE  
PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

Docket No. 2003-859

December 10, 2003

PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION  
Inquiry into the Reduction of  
Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs)

NOTICE OF INQUIRY  
AND REQUEST FOR  
COMMENTS

WELCH, Chairman; DIAMOND, REISHUS, Commissioners

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## **I. SUMMARY**

By way of this Notice, the Maine Public Utilities Commission (Commission) initiates an inquiry into the Legislature's directive that the Emergency Services Communication Bureau (ESCB), to the extent possible, reduce the number of public safety answering points (PSAPs) from 48 to between 16 and 24. 25 M.R.S.A. §2926 (2-A).<sup>1</sup>

The Commission seeks information from interested persons about the criteria for determining the number of PSAPs, appropriate methods to identify which PSAPs to close, processes for closing, time frame for closing, and impact on other normal functions of an emergency communications center, i.e. radio inter-operability, staffing, ability to function in a regional configuration, if such closings occur.

## **II. BACKGROUND**

In 1996, ESCB established standards for a statewide enhanced E-911 system through a rulemaking, as required by 25 M.R.S.A. § 2926 (3). The final wireline PSAP became operational in Hancock County in February of 2003 bringing the total number of PSAPs to 48.

The 121<sup>st</sup> Legislature approved legislation with a goal of reducing the total number of activated PSAPs, in part, as a means to maintain the 9-1-1 surcharge at \$.50. Any reduction is to take place no later than October 17, 2005, which coincides with the termination date of the current E9-1-1 service provider contract.

Attachment A identifies the location of the current 48 PSAPs. Attachment B shows the FY02 yearly and average daily E9-1-1 call volume for each PSAP location and Attachment C lists the number of positions at each PSAP location.

The basic annual cost to the state system for a 2-position PSAP is approximately \$40,000 per year. A review of PSAP call volume in Attachment B suggests that a reduction in the total number of PSAPs could be cost effective. The reduction of PSAPs

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<sup>1</sup> During its last session, the Legislature changed oversight and management of ESCB from the Department of Public Safety to the Commission. P.L. 2003, ch. 359.

would result in cost savings to the state E9-1-1 system and to the communities that consolidate both PSAP and dispatch functions into a regional PSAP.

We understand that there are many associated factors in addition to PSAP functionality that may impact the reduction of PSAPs. Although this inquiry will focus on E9-1-1 functionality, such impacts will be considered as part of any PSAP reduction decision.

### **III. RELEVANT STATUTORY PROVISIONS**

Title 25 M.R.S.A. §2926 (2-A) provides:

Goal. To the extent possible, the bureau shall establish a total of between 16 and 24 public service answering points. The bureau shall seek to coordinate any reduction in the number of public service answering points to achieve this goal with any contractual obligations it may have or may enter into that are or could be affected by the reduction.

Title 25 M.R.S.A. §2921 (7) defines "Public safety answering point" as "a facility with enhanced 9-1-1 capability, operated on a 24-hour basis, assigned the responsibility of receiving 9-1-1 calls and, as appropriate, directly dispatching emergency services or through transfer routing or relay routing, passing 9-1-1 calls to public or private safety agencies." A PSAP is an emergency E9-1-1 telephone answering point and does not include the dispatching function of a communication center although both functions may be performed by the same employee.

### **IV. PROCESS**

The purpose of this Inquiry is to allow the Commission and Bureau to collect information about the efficacy of reducing the current number of PSAPs. Depending on the comments received, the Commission may propose a change in the context of a rulemaking. The rulemaking will proceed as required by the Maine Administrative Procedures Act and 25 M.R.S.A. § 2926 (3). The Commission would like to conclude any rulemaking by late spring or summer to allow sufficient time for any planning or transitioning before the October 2005 deadline.

### **V. ISSUES/QUESTIONS**

All interested persons are encouraged to respond in written detail to the following questions:

1. Will a reduction in the total number of PSAPs be in the public safety interest of the citizens and visitors of the State of Maine?
2. What is the overall impact of a reduction in PSAPs as it relates to radio interoperability and a wide area regional PSAP and communications center?

3. Comment on funding issues and/or incentives for PSAP regionalization/consolidation.
4. What is the appropriate number of PSAPs required to effectively operate the statewide E9-1-1 system?
5. What method and criteria should be used to identify which PSAPs to close?
6. Comment on the concept of requiring minimum mandatory training standards for calltakers and dispatchers and whether such standards would affect participation in regional PSAPs..
7. In addition to the above items, please identify and comment on any other issues that the Commission should consider in this Inquiry.

The Commission specifically requests that all towns in Cumberland, Kennebec and York Counties respond, as 30 of the existing 48 PSAPs are located within these jurisdictions.

## VI. CONCLUSION

Comments should be filed no later than January 16, 2004. Comments should be submitted electronically by going to the Commission web site [www.maine.gov/mpuc](http://www.maine.gov/mpuc) and following the electronic filing instructions. Persons without electronic access may mail comments to Administrative Director, Maine Public Utilities Commission, 242 State Street, State House Station 18, Augusta, ME 04333. All comments will appear on the Virtual Case File section of the Commission's web site. Filings should refer to Docket No. 2003-859.

The Commission will notify all persons who file comments of any further activities in this Inquiry and of any subsequent rulemaking.

We direct our Administrative Director to mail copies of this Notice of Inquiry and Request For Comments to all PSAPs, towns, County Commissioners, Maine Municipal Association, and Police, Fire, and Sheriff Associations.

Dated at Augusta, Maine, this 10<sup>th</sup> day of December, 2003.

BY ORDER OF THE COMMISSION

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Dennis L. Keschl  
Administrative Director

COMMISSIONERS VOTING FOR:      Welch  
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COMMISSIONER ABSENT:              Reishus

## NOTICE OF RIGHTS TO REVIEW OR APPEAL

5 M.R.S.A. § 9061 requires the Public Utilities Commission to give each party to an adjudicatory proceeding written notice of the party's rights to review or appeal of its decision made at the conclusion of the adjudicatory proceeding. The methods of review or appeal of PUC decisions at the conclusion of an adjudicatory proceeding are as follows:

1. Reconsideration of the Commission's Order may be requested under Section 1004 of the Commission's Rules of Practice and Procedure (65-407 C.M.R.110) within 20 days of the date of the Order by filing a petition with the Commission stating the grounds upon which reconsideration is sought.
2. Appeal of a final decision of the Commission may be taken to the Law Court by filing, within **21 days** of the date of the Order, a Notice of Appeal with the Administrative Director of the Commission, pursuant to 35-A M.R.S.A. § 1320(1)-(4) and the Maine Rules of Appellate Procedure.
3. Additional court review of constitutional issues or issues involving the justness or reasonableness of rates may be had by the filing of an appeal with the Law Court, pursuant to 35-A M.R.S.A. § 1320(5).

Note: The attachment of this Notice to a document does not indicate the Commission's view that the particular document may be subject to review or appeal. Similarly, the failure of the Commission to attach a copy of this Notice to a document does not indicate the Commission's view that the document is not subject to review or appeal.